



AFRICAN RESPONSE TO QUALITY EDUCATION: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN KENYA

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Abstract:

This paper sought to comparatively interrogate the extent of achievement of quantitative vis-à-vis Quality education in Kenya. It also critically appraised the effect of various resources on the quality of Primary school education in Kenya. Globally, basic knowledge is recognized as the cornerstone of any country with a stable economy. Bearing in mind the role played by school in development, the UN general assembly in 1948 endorsed education as a fundamental human right. The main objective of the study was to analyze the influence of the democratization of education on the quality of primary school education. The paper examined the role played by UNESCO in the democratization of education globally and Africa in particular. The paper further assessed prospects that have arisen in Kenya due to the universalization of education. It further examined the challenges of universalization of education. It, therefore, focused on the issue of quality education after the attainment of EFA and UPE. It also analyzed difficulties that arise due to the upsurge of enrolment in primary schools and how they affect quality education in Kenya. Particular attention was given to the crises in inputs and processes that affect the output of quality primary education. These crises were reflected in class size, teacher establishment, and physical resources that influence quality education. The paper adopted a document analysis method. The analysis was drawn from international and local legal instruments on quantitative and qualitative primary school education. A regional analysis of the necessary education policies and the legal framework in Kenya was conducted. Studies conducted in Kenya on quantity and quality primary education were also examined. The interrogation would help the policy formulators formulate education policies and the legal framework, which would promote quantitative and qualitative primary school education. The policy implementers would understand and appreciate education policies. These are the policies within which they operate and provide effective leadership in management practices. The practices are crucial in the

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implementation of quality education at primary school level. This paper is significant to the field of comparative and international education since it provides data on what the Kenyan government is doing in promoting the development of quantitative and qualitative primary education. The study suggested the actualization of education policy guidelines to promote quality education in primary schools. Inefficiency has infiltrated primary schools due to inadequate resources. It was, therefore, recommended that the government should come up with a clear policy to redress inefficiency in primary schools to improve the quality of primary education. It was further suggested that proper structures be put in place to enable implementation for the achievement of quality primary education. It was also recommended that the government of Kenya should consider allocating at least 25 percent of the national budget.

Keywords: access, quality education, basic education, legal framework

1. Introduction

Nations (UN) declared education as one of the human rights in 1948. It is viewed as essential for the exercise of all human rights. Hence, it is a fundamental human right as it promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields development benefits. With these social aspirations, education is expected to play the following roles: According to the human capital model, the function of schools is to provide learners with information and skills that will be valuable later in life. In this respect, education is considered as human resource. The UN Secretary-General's (2009) report on peacebuilding identified some priorities in conflict-affected situations. These priorities range from establishing security, building confidence in a political process, delivering initial peace dividends, and expanding core national capacity. Subsequently, education positively influences on aspects of conflict that contribute to peacebuilding. According to UNESCO (2005), quality education is manifested in five dimensions of learners' characteristics; teachers' characteristics; teaching and learning processes; facilitating inputs; and outcomes of the learning process. Tikly (2010) developed a model of good quality education that entails enabling policy environments, enabling the school environment, and enabling home and community environments.

In light of these aspirations, the UN and UNESCO developed normative instruments for international legal obligations on the right to education. These instruments promote the reason for every person to enjoy access to education of good quality without any discrimination. As a result, UNESCO convened a conference of African states on the development of education in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 1961 (UNESCO, 1961). The meeting resolved to have modern African education open to all without discrimination and decided to achieve UPE by 1980. The United Nations Assembly later adopted the convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) on 20/11/1989. Under article 28 of the agreement, it is stated that every child shall have a right to education, and primary school education shall be made compulsory and free to all. The

1990 global conference held in Jomtien on Education for All (EFA) addressed the issue of quality education (UNESCO, 1990). The following had to be identified as indicators of quality education: the percentage of trained teachers in schools and their professional commitment; availability of suitable instructional materials and capacity of pupils and teachers to use these materials; and the extent to which inclusive school environment is conducive for learning (UNESCO, 1993).

As in most countries worldwide, Sub-Saharan African countries are striving to build their own human capital. This can help them compete for jobs and investments in the increasingly globalized world. The ambitions and aspirations of Sub-Saharan African countries and their youth far exceed this fundamental goal. In recent years educational access has risen sharply across Sub-Saharan Africa. Many Sub-Saharan African governments have introduced free primary education (FPE) policies. Following the introduction of FPE, many countries have experienced high enrolments in primary schools. Alongside this quantitative push, is the growing awareness of the need to make sure that students learn and acquire the skills needed for life and work. The goal of learning and completion of primary education is the central objective of education policy in sub-Saharan Africa, to which all countries of the region committed themselves to 1990 Jomtien, 2000 Dakar and the 2000 MDGs for achieving UPE by 2015.

Besides, Africa has also committed herself to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The outcome target number one of SDG number 4 states that by 2030, all boys and girls complete free and quality primary and secondary education. In light of this, it is prudent that in addition to access, good quality education is an essential means of achieving SDG number 4. Therefore, the focus on getting African children into school has recently expanded to ensure that the quality of their learning experience improves as enrollments grow. In many schools in Africa, the learning achievement is so low that after several years of schooling, the students still have not obtained basic literacy and numeracy skills (ADEA, 2005).

Although FPE policies in Africa have contributed significantly to access in primary education, there is increasing deterioration of the quality of primary school education. This is due to cost and human capacity. Operating a national quality assurance, entails an annual budget of at least US\$450,000 and requires appropriately trained and experienced staff (World Bank, 2007). This affects the provision of physical facilities, teaching and learning materials, deployment of teachers, and performance to the transition of pupils from primary to secondary education. Priorities for World Bank lending for primary school education in Sub-Saharan Africa include: increasing children's learning and completion rates, expanding access to schooling, and efficient utilization of additional resources for primary education. There seems to be strong evidence of internal inefficiency. Most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa had an average primary school completion rate (PCR) of 67 percent by 2009 (World Bank, 2012). The transition rate of students from primary to secondary stood at 33 percent. There is also a high rate of repetition at all levels of primary, whether public or private. Schools have also enrolled over-age children, and teachers use unsound pedagogical approaches. Sub-

Saharan Africa (SSA), with about 740 million people (World Bank, 2007) and a fast increasing number of public and private primary education institutions with high gross enrollment ratio in the world, is now paying more considerable attention to issues of quality at the primary school level. Countries are becoming conscious of the need for sufficient quality assurance and quality improvement in primary schools.

In Kenya, the government committed to the implementation of the international protocols (UPE, UNCRC, EFA, 2000 Dakar framework for action, MDGs and SDGs) through domestication of the international instruments. The domestication led to legislative development and enactment of Children Act of 2001, sessional paper number 1 of 2005, sessional paper number 14 of 2012, and Basic education Act of 2013. The constitution of Kenya was promulgated in 2010. The structure recognized education as a fundamental human right. It provides quality primary education as a right. Subsequently, the government convened a national conference on education in 2003.

Consequently, the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) was constituted to implement the national plan of action. In spite of this, sessional paper number 1 of 2005 on education, training, and research had to be enacted by parliament. The sessional paper had to be operationalized through KESSP (2005-2010). However, with the promulgation of the constitution of Kenya in 2010, there was a need for realignment of the education sector with the law. Hence sessional paper number 14 of 2012 on education and training, and the Basic Education Act of 2013 had to be enacted by parliament. These legal instruments emphasized the improvement of quality education.

The government of Kenya has invested in the education sector to realize EFA and MDGs and SDGs. Currently, the government has set 6.4 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the education sector (GOK, 2014). The 6.4% GDP translates to 17 percent of the national budget. The purpose is to realize quality education in primary schools. However, most of the money (52 percent) allocated is spent on recurrent costs, especially teachers' salaries. It is in light of this that Mackatiani (2017) notes that Kenya is an oriented examination system of education. Quality in Kenya is, therefore, measured by the performance of students in national examinations. But whether schools are functioning efficiently or whether pupils are learning in schools is another matter. There appear to inefficiency in the allocation and usage of resources. The issue of quality is, therefore, a concern for researchers and education authorities worldwide. It has drawn attention to policy and practice interventions to achieve the same.

In light of the background information, there is evidence that quality education in primary schools is crucial. It is against this background that this study interrogated the imperative of quality concerning FPE in Kenya.

2. Statement of the problem

From the background information, it is evident that Kenya domesticated international protocols to realize EFA and MDGs and SDGs. Kenya had to re-introduce FPE in January 2003. The domestication was to make primary education accessible to all children

irrespective of their social classes. The primary school education to be offered is to be qualitative. However, the sudden influx of pupil population has had far-reaching implications in terms of existing physical facilities, teaching/ learning resources, and human resources. These implications have challenged the quality of education being offered to all citizens. The Education policy formulated is to promote quality education as expected by citizens and promote these aspirations. Teachers, as policy implementers, eventually translate the rules and regulations into actual classroom practice on a day-to-day basis.

Nevertheless, this appears elusive, as evidenced by a low academic performance by learners. This scenario is caused by conservative elements in people's mental states, which makes it difficult for teachers and other stakeholders to adapt and face challenges that arise due to access. This study, therefore, investigated whether issues of quality education in primary schools in Kenya are a reality or an assumption.

3. Significance of the study

The study might be significant to the government of Kenya and sub-Saharan countries, as the findings would be used by education planners on how to incorporate available inputs into education to achieve quality education in public primary schools. Policy planners would use measures identified in the formulation of policy on provision, improvement, and efficiency of primary education. Using the findings on quality education in public and private primary schools, roadmaps would be designed for continuous improvement of quality education. When educators understand the aspect of continuous improvement, they will gain the confidence to shape and alter the nature of their schools.

Findings from this study may also provide suggestions for quality assurance to be shared with people involved in the field and the public at large. The study findings are likely to draw the attention of stakeholders to focus on the needy areas concerning the implementation of quality education in primary schools. Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) may use the information on the supervision of schools. The results, too, are likely to assist teachers in dealing with their weaknesses, including redressing them.

Finally, the findings of the study will further add to the growth of knowledge of quantity and quality education in primary schools. This study may add to the current research findings and literature on quality education in primary schools. Besides, it might help future researchers while identifying priority areas in which to carry out more research. The findings may, therefore, be of interest to researchers in educational policy studies; and comparative and international education since it provides data on what the Kenyan government is doing in promoting the development of the quantitative and qualitative primary school.

4. Theoretical framework

This study used systems theory. Systems theory was advanced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968). He emphasized that systems are open and interact with their environments to acquire properties qualitatively. Systems theory focuses on the arrangement of relations between the parts which connect them into a whole. It further provides an analysis of an organization. It recognized the influence of personnel in an environment on organizational structure and function. It focuses on background and how changes can impact on the organizations. It also explains the interdependence that is reflected in the organizational behavior. Systems theory is, therefore, an Input Process Output model. This study consequently used this theory as schools are organizations with various parts that are open and interact to acquire qualitative properties. A qualitative property to be learned is the implementation of quality education in primary schools. This is the process in this model. Inputs (class size physical facilities instructional materials and human resources) led to the implementation of quality education in primary schools. These are the independent variables of this study. The output which culminates into outcomes of quality education is realized in quality indicators. These indicators include literacy skills, numeracy skills, life skills values, and attitudes.

5. Research Methodology

The study adopted a Documentary analysis where documentary evidence to support and validate facts stated the research was obtained. The local sources of documents included the constitution of Kenya, education Act children Act, sessional papers, and the national conference of education reports. International legal instruments included the 1948 UN declaration of education as a fundamental human right, UPE and EFA declarations United Nations Convention on Rights of Children (UNCRC) 2000 Dakar framework for action and MDGs. Research findings on FPE were on empirical studies conducted in Kenya by various researchers. Analytic reading and review of these written materials on free primary education and imperative of quality were done. The data was analyzed and interpreted through the examination of documents and records relevant to FPE and quality education. The researcher extracted relevant statements of facts to validate the individual research objectives of the study. The objectives of the study were to: determine the legal framework on quantitative primary education in Kenya, investigate the implementation of education policies in Kenyan primary schools and assess the role played by resources in the implementation of quality primary education in Kenya. Discourse analysis and interpretative analysis was conducted to capture meaning from the texts. The variables investigated included school physical infrastructure, human resources, and instructional materials. These variables are considered crucial for pupils to participate reasonably in learning activities in the classrooms.

6. Data sources and Discussions

6.1 Access in Primary Education

The Kenya government had to commit herself to international protocols on the expansion of education and the promotion of quality education. The instruments signed included 1990 (Jomtien) and 2000(Dakar) declarations on Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE). She had to develop policies on UPE to attain a global target for EFA. Parliament had to enact Children Act in 2001. Section 7(1) of the Act states that every child has a right to education, the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the government and parents (Children Act, 2001). The constitution of Kenya under Article 53(1a) recognizes Education as a fundamental human right. Kenya began a campaign for universal primary education (UPE) after 1963. The independent government abolished the racial system of education and introduced a national system of education in 1965. In 1974 Kenya introduced FPE from class 1 to class 4. By 1982, the primary enrollment had grown to 4,184,602 pupils. In 2003, Kenya reintroduced FPE. Consequently, there was an increase in pupil enrollment from 6,131,000 in 2002 to 7,208,100 in 2003(G.O.K 2004:34). The achievement of UPE was realized in 2003 with the provision of FPE and subsequent increase in enrolment (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2008). Since the introduction of FPE in Kenya in 2003, there has been an upward trend in enrollment. This is reflected in Table 6.1 below on enrollment trends of pupils in primary schools from 2009 to 2013

Table 6.1: Primary enrolment (2009-2013)

2010	2011	2012	2013
9381.3	9857.9	9995.2	10182.6

Source: Kenya Bureau of Statistics (2014).

The above survey reveals that there has been a significant improvement in access to Education since 2003. UNESCO (1995) concurs that in terms of access, the Kenyan education system, at least at the primary level, is one of the best on the continent. While FPE has succeeded in increasing the number of children enrolled in primary schools, there is concern over the quality of primary school education being offered. High enrolment has put pressure on existing resources responsible for quality education (GOK, 2004). In light of this, classes are over-enrolled. With inadequate physical facilities, instructional materials, and teachers; effective learning achievement cannot be realized. Therefore although FPE has succeeded in increasing the number of children enrolled in primary schools, there is concern over the quality of primary school education being offered.

6.2 Quality of primary education

The issue of quality education arose during the EFA global conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). Declaration number two of the conference is to ensure that by 2015, all children access free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

The 2000 Dakar framework for action reaffirmed quality as a determinant of enrolment, retention, and achievement (UNESCO, 2000). It had to expand the definition of quality to include characteristics of learners, processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (curriculum), and systems (good governance and equitable resource allocations). In this view, Page (2008) further states that quality education should incorporate elements of strong leadership and vision, quality instruction, clear standards, assessment and accountability, adequate and equitable resources, family participation, and community involvement. If these elements excluded, then quality will be diluted. GOK (2004) corroborated these findings when it observed that with the introduction of FPE in 2003, there was an increase in enrolment from 5.9 million students in 2002 to 7.2 million students in 2003, but there were inadequate physical facilities. There is an acute shortage of teachers, as revealed by UNICEF. It is estimated that there is a pitfall of 31000 teachers in the country (UNICEF, 2008). This is reflected in table 6.2 on enrolment trends and teachers in service from 2002 to 2010.

Table 6.2: Enrolment trends and teachers in service from 2002 to 2010

Year	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Pupils	6,062,742	7,394,763	7,632,113	8,563,777	9,381,281
Teachers	175,792	176,381	162,643	170,059	184,873
Ratio	35:1	42:1	47:1	51:1	51:1

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2011).

From Table 6.2, the survey revealed that there had been a considerable improvement in access to Education since 2003. However, the figures reflected in the table above shows that by 2010, the ratio of pupils to teachers stood at 51:1. UNICEF (2008) concurs with the findings when estimated a shortfall of 31000 teachers. Uwezo (2011) collaborated with the outcomes when it noted that there was a severe shortage of teachers in primary schools at a rate of 4 teachers per school. A study conducted by Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), 2010 revealed that 37.8 percent of teachers had not attended in-service courses since 2003. Mackatiani et al. concurred with these findings when they noted that teachers hardly attended in-service courses due to shortage of education officers which has negatively affected the organization of in-service courses.

In light of this, the report further revealed that there was minimal attainment of literacy and numeracy skills. In spite of this, the survey conducted by UWEZO (2011) showed that many children accessed primary education, but the quality of primary school education was wanting as reflected in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Basic competency achievement

Level of children assessed	Cannot read English paragraph	Cannot read Kiswahili paragraph	Cannot do subtraction
GRADE 2	85%	81%	79%
GRADE 5	27%	23%	30%
GRADE 8	4%	4%	10%

Source: UWEZO (2011).

From the table above, there is a clear indication of poor achievement of required competencies in primary schools. Poor outcomes of learning are, therefore, indicators driven by pressure from inputs. A study conducted by Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for monitoring quality in 2007 noted that pupils in Kenyan primary schools lacked instructional materials. Stephens (1991) further argues that quality Education cannot be judged only in terms of inputs and output but also in terms of processes by which it is achieved. The monitoring of quality education entails the inspection of methods that promote the quality of education. As a result, school level supervision should be conducted if quality education is to be realized.

7. Results and Conclusions

With the rise of people's aspirations, education was declared a fundamental human right by the UN General Assembly in 1948. Considering the importance of primary education in economic development and peace development, countries Sub Saharan Africa had to launch programs to increase access in primary school education. This was in response to the globalized framework of Jomtien and 2000 Dakar framework for action and the MDGs on achieving universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. Many Sub-Saharan African governments had to abolish school fees in public primary schools. This led to the introduction of FPE in Africa. This was geared towards the achievement of EFA. However, some of the African countries had enormous differences in enrolments and participation. Other Sub Saharan countries had to achieve close to universal provision. The rest of the sub-Saharan Africa countries still lag in the achievement of global primary education. This is due to conflicts and weak economies in some of these African countries. This has led to the realization of the goal of FPE in some countries of Sub Sahara Africa.

Following the introduction of free primary education, many countries in Africa have experienced an upsurge in primary school enrolments. Despite the increased access to quantity education, quality education, which is seen as an essential means of achieving development goals has not been realized. In spite of this, many countries have fallen short of attaining the EFA goal of quality education. There is increasing deterioration of the quality of primary education due to the provision of physical facilities, teaching, and learning materials. Teacher deployment in primary schools is low. There is also evidence of internal inefficiency (GOK2014), due to the enrolment of over-age children, high rates of repetition, dropout rates, and use of unprofessional teaching approaches. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) rose from 67.8 percent in 2002 to 95.3 percent in 2013. However, the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) increased from 88.2 percent in 2002 to 119.6 percent in 2013. It is, therefore, evident that a higher percentage of school-age children have not accessed schooling. There was also an increase in transition rate to secondary schools from 66.9 percent in 2009 to 76.6 percent in 2012. In spite of this, the completion rate increased from 57.7 percent in 2000 to 81.8 percent in 2013. However, the issue of inefficiency has not been seriously addressed by the government. The government has

only redressed the issue of quality by coming up with benchmarks for quality education, as reflected in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: National Benchmarks for selected indicators of quality of education

Selected indicator	Description of indicator	National benchmark
Basic learning materials	Pupil has at least one exercise book, a pencil or a pen, and a ruler	100%
Textbooks	Pupils have textbooks in required ratios	3:1 and 2:1
Pupil-teacher ratios	Total number of pupils in a school divided by number of teachers in the school	40:1
Class size	Average number of pupils per class	45
Supervisory capacity	School level supervision	100%
INSET	INSET for new teaching and learning methods	100%

Source: MOEST (2005).

From the table above, learning materials are considered crucial to ensure that the pupils participate reasonably in learning activities in the classrooms. Therefore, all pupils should have these materials. Concerning pupil-teacher ratios and class size, smaller values are preferred for better quality education. It is, therefore, necessary to have lower costs on these two indicators as they are associated with more interaction between teachers and pupils, resulting in better quality education. Hence the four area areas of focus included class size, school physical facilities, instructional materials, and school supervision. These benchmarks form the basis upon which quality education can be realized.

8. Recommendations

- 1) The government of Kenya has allocated 17 percent of her national budget to education. However, 52 percent of the money allocated is spent on teachers' salaries. It is therefore recommended that at least 25 percent of the national budget be allocated to the education sector if the developmental goal of quality is to be realized.
- 2) This study has established that there is legislation to embrace free and qualitative primary education. The FPE policy is in place, and benchmarks for quality education have set by the government. However, the implementation of education policy to ensure quality is crucial. It is therefore recommended that proper structures be put in place to enable the application for the achievement of quality primary education.
- 3) The study established that the government of Kenya has set a benchmark of the ratio of pupils to teachers at 40:1. However, there is an acute shortage of teachers, which has led to an adverse impact on the quality of primary education. It is therefore recommended that the government should actualize her obligation on the supply of adequate teachers in primary schools.

- 4) EFA, UPE, and SDGs policies have contributed significantly to quantitative primary education. However, there is increasing deterioration of quality primary education ranging from the provision of physical facilities, teaching, and learning materials to deployment of teachers. It is therefore recommended that a proper policy be put in place to address these measures to improve the quality of primary education.
- 5) From the study, there is evidence of internal inefficiency reflected enrolment of over-age children, high rates of repetition, and dropout rates. The government has not seriously addressed the issue of incompetence. It is there recommended that the government should come up with a clear policy to redress inefficiency in primary schools.

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